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CHRISTIAN LOVE:

OR

CHARITY AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

OF

TRUE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

BY REV. DANIEL WISE.

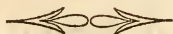
“This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.”—*Jesus Christ.*

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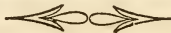
PREFACE.

IT must be conceded by every person who understands the true spirit and genius of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that its victories are to be won and its empire established by the influence of LOVE. It must also be admitted, by every candid and careful observer of human nature and of the Christian Church, that there is a fearful want of love among the professed disciples of the Savior. The warm-hearted attachment, the burning desire to make men happy, the self-sacrificing labors for the good of man which so strikingly marked the life, the actions, and the spirit of the Master, are attributes of character for which we look almost in vain, as we survey the militant church. I would not be understood to say that they are entirely invisible, because there are some, yea many, disciples baptized deeply with the unction of Christ; and the *elements* of his holy character exist in some small degree in every Christian convert. But it is undeniably true of the *MASSES*, who compose our churches, that they do not *develope* either in their lives or spirits, the

PREFACE.

great gospel idea of *Love*: they do not *force* the conviction on a miserable world, that the church is ruled by a divine affection—by a holy mutual fondness which exists no where else. And it is not saying too much, to affirm that until such a conviction is forced upon the world, it will not be converted.

With these views I have been led to the composition of this little book. Earnestly hoping that it may be a seed of spiritual and eternal fruit, it is cast forth, seeking a soil congenial with its nature, by one of the unworthiest laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.



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CHRISTIAN LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

THERE is not, in the whole history of mankind, a picture of greater moral loveliness than the scene of Christ's last interview with his disciples. The inspired evangelist, John, has sketched it with a master's hand ; so that he who studies it, with a Christian's spirit, will find his heart melted, and his eyes moistened with tears of affectionate admiration.

Let us examine it a moment. The place is the chamber where they had celebrated the paschal supper. The

time, is the evening preceding the day of the Master's death. He has just unfolded to his distressed disciples the fact of his speedy departure from among them. Judas, the betrayer, has left, and is busy in the prosecution of his dastardly work. Jesus beholds himself on the brink of that horrible abyss of agony and death into which it behoved him to plunge for the salvation of a lost world. A cloud of sadness therefore rests upon his soul; while a deeper gloom veils the spirits of the desponding eleven. Under these appalling circumstances he speaks; and speaks, even then, with the authority of a God. "A new commandment," he says, "I give unto you."

And what was this new commandment? It was given in an hour when the fiendish malice of his powerful enemies was about to triumph: when his betrayer had closed the impious contract which was to place his innocent person

in the power of murderers ; when the iron-hearted soldier was unsheathing the sword for his destruction ; and that fierce hatred which had hunted him with persecutions and maledictions all over Judea was gathering its full strength, so soon to be expended in the clamorous and fatally triumphant cry of " Crucify him ! Crucify him ! "

In such an hour as this what sort of a commandment might be expected from a great and powerful leader to his faithful and devoted friends ? Was it not natural for Christ to remember, that the vast masses who had recently sung Hosannahs to his honor and offered their wild strength to place him on David's throne, could easily be excited to take the sword in his defence ? Did he, then, command his faithful eleven to raise a banner of defiance and rally the multitudes to battle ? Did he utter the word that should open the sluices of slaughter

and fill Jerusalem and Judea with blood? He might have done it. Had he raised the Lion of Juda on Mount Olivet, and sent his eleven friends to summon the people to his standard, a few hours would have sufficed to place him on the visible throne of David! He knew this. Did he do it? O no. He forgot *himself*. His new command contemplated only the happiness of his friends, and left him to the ferocity of his enemies. It was simply,

“Love one another as I have loved you!”

What a beautiful exhibition of divine love was this new commandment! How it stands out in sublime contrast with the spirit of his age! That, was emphatically an age of selfishness and hate. The whole mass of mankind was filled with all unrighteousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; without natural affection, implacable, un-

merciful.* To this awful state of things the Jew was scarcely an exception. Surrounded by such universal selfishness, the blessed Jesus gave his new command, "Love one another as I have loved you ;" a command which like an oasis in the desert is rendered more beautiful by the rugged barrenness of the surrounding scenery. Blessed Jesus !

"King of glory, king of peace,
I will love thee."

Why did our blessed Lord call this a *new* commandment? Love for man had always formed a part of the divine law. Moses had taught it and the Jews recognized it as a branch of religious duty. Why then did Christ call it a *new* command ?

The answer is plain from the words of the commandment itself. Love one ano-

* Romans 1 : 29, 30, 31.

ther *as I have loved you*. It was not new in its requirement, but in its *measure*. The old Levitical precept said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*;" this says: "Thou shalt love him *as I have loved you*;" which is, as if the precious Savior had said: "The regard which you feel for yourselves, large as it is, is too contracted a measure for that holy affection which as my disciples I desire to see prevailing among you; that ancient standard, high as it is, beautiful as it appears, and far superior as it may be to any exhibition of love heretofore made among men, is neither so high, so beautiful, nor so superior as that, by which I, your Lord and Master, would have you model your affection for each other. I would have you love as I love. I wish you to breathe the same intensely affectionate spirit upon each other as I have breathed on you."

But, why did not the blessed Redeemer

leave the *measure* of mutual love where it was left by the Levitical precept? Surely that was a *large* measure! What could man do more than to love another as he loved himself?

The Levitical precept, high and glorious as it was in itself, and perfect as it would have been *for a race of righteous and sinless beings*, was nevertheless uncertain and insufficient in the case of depraved human nature.

Its *standard* was uncertain. Man did not love himself as he ought. His self-love was neither pure nor intelligent. Blinded by clouds of stormy passions, he was accustomed to rush headlong upon destruction. Depraved in his whole nature, carnal in his desires, he easily mistook his own true interests and recklessly spoiled both soul and body by sin, and even when under gracious influences, did many things to his own hurt. If he did this for himself, would he do better for

others? Even if he loved them as he loved himself; that love would be insufficient to make him the safe and effectual friend of his fellow creatures; who, like himself, destined for immortality, needed to be loved with an affection that yearned over their spiritual and eternal interests.

It may be asked, do not these views cast a shadow on the wisdom of the Eternal God, who pronounced the Levitical precept? By no means. For that precept, as before remarked, was perfect in itself. That the *standard* it established was not so, was no fault of the great Lawgiver. His law had already prescribed how man should love himself, and on the presumption that these prescriptions would be faithfully followed, it further required that man should love his neighbor in the same manner. Had man done this, the precept would have been as perfect in its *standard* as it was in itself. If he failed to meet this expectation, was the

wisdom of the Law-giver to be impeached?

But why did God give a standard so imperfect? Clearly, because *at the time* he could give no other. There never had been a perfect model of human love upon earth, whose example could be made a pattern for the race. Moses, Abraham, Enoch, and all the patriarchs, pious and noble as were their characters, were not perfect models of that holy, wide-spreading affection, which the benevolent Creator would see in the bosom of his creatures. And had they been such, it would have been *unsafe* to present them as models; for such is the moral perversity of man, that he would in that case have soon elevated them into gods, and instead of copying their benevolence, paid them the worship of his idolatrous heart.

But what was lacking at the era of the Levitical precept, existed when the new law of love was pronounced. Its glori-

ous author, as a perfect man, had furnished a safe and complete model, a certain, intelligible standard in his own spotless life of love. He had taught both how man should love himself and how he should love his fellow: that he should love *himself* in subordination to his duty to glorify God in all things, and his neighbor with a most holy and self-denying affection. And being God, as well as man, no idolatry could possibly follow from his being the standard for human imitation.

The blessed Savior having set this example, was thereby prepared, not to abrogate but to *perfect* the Levitical precept—to give it what, from necessity, it lacked before, a practical model by which it might be illustrated and understood. As he had loved his disciples, they were to love one another. This removed all uncertainty—all doubt—as to the nature and extent of Christian love. They had

seen, tasted and enjoyed his unequalled affection; an affection which uniformly studied to promote their highest and best interests; which shrunk from no sacrifice, pain, or self-denial, not even from death itself. A love that made him forget himself and justified him in saying: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," and which, as we gaze upon its highest act, enacted amidst the horrors of Gethsemane and Calvary, moves the heart to exclaim:

"Lamb of God! was ever pain,
Was ever LOVE like THINE "

We are now prepared to answer that trembling disciple, who inquires: "With what degree of affection must I love the followers of Jesus Christ?" or in other words, "What is Christian love?"

The answer is now an easy one. It is such a clear, intense, uniform, practical

love for the bodies and souls of the Lord's disciples as the blessed Jesus himself exhibited towards them when on earth ; for said he, " A new commandment I give unto you ; *as I have loved you*, that ye love one another."

Let us look this commandment steadily in the face, and endeavor to understand its details. This is the more necessary because the possession of this Christian-like love for the friends of Jesus is made by him the evidence of our discipleship. " By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples ; if ye have love one to another ;" and that apostle, who was the most successful in copying the sweet spirit of the Great Teacher, has written, " He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."

From these Scriptures it plainly appears that if we love not, we have no Christianity, and no claim on the church or world for their confidence in our reli-

gious professions. Christ has, by his command, made brotherly love a binding duty; and he also gives the church and world authority to judge us unfaithful and unchristian if we are found without it. To the humble believer, therefore, this is among the most solemn questions that can come before him. He will not turn from it. He will search into it, for his soul will be startled to be reminded that *if he has no love he has no religion!* or if he have hatred and malice in his heart he is no disciple of Jesus. For John has written: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

Come then, O Christian reader, and lay your heart bare before God. Search into its hidden recesses and see whether Christian love rules it, fills it, adorns it, or whether it is polluted by bitterness, prejudices, strifes, and envyings: whether it breathes benevolence and kindness towards the household of faith, or indif-

ference, coldness and hostility. Forget not that your eternal hopes depend on the decision of this question, since you must say as St. Paul wrote: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIAN LOVE EXPLAINED.

SUPPOSE a wise and judicious mother, having occasion to leave home some afternoon, requests her children to remain in the nursery, with a general charge to be loving to each other, and an especial request to the elder children to take care of the babe. After she is gone, the children cluster together and say, "We will be good and kind to-day, because it will be so pleasing to mother."

"Yes," replies one, "Mother always feels very much hurt if we do not agree; and it would be very wicked to hurt her feelings, she is so good to us all."

"But what shall we do with the baby?"

He will hinder us from play if he should wake up?" asks another.

"O," replies a third, "we will try and keep him quiet. You know that mother would be very much grieved if we should neglect him. She loves him very tenderly because, as she says, he is so young and helpless. We will take care of the baby for mother's sake; and if we do not have so much play, we shall please her, and that will be better."

Does the reader perceive the application of this illustration? Simple as it is, it reveals the principles of genuine Christian love. For, as the children agreed to be kind to each other for their mother's sake, and to take an affectionate care of the babe because the mother loved it, so an individual Christian loves all other Christians, because Christ loves them, and because he wishes each one of his followers to love all the rest.

These are peculiarities which dis-

tinguish Christian love from ordinary natural affection. The latter is excited and graduated by purely selfish considerations, the former, by a pre-existing love for the Redeemer of mankind; the latter exists only as the beloved one presents personal attractions, pleasing attributes of mental character, or promotes in some way the pleasure and comfort of the attached parties; while the former exists without respect to any quality in its object except Christian discipleship. Natural affection proceeds from the perception and enjoyment of estimable and desirable qualities in its object. Christian love is the offspring of the love of Jesus. If you ask a true Christian why he loves the church of God, he will reply with holy St. Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

And yet how common are such cases as the following among the professed followers of the Savior! Two members

of a church meet. After the customary salutations are over, the name of some other member of the church is introduced somewhat in the form of the succeeding dialogue:

“How do you like Mrs. Henry, our new neighbor, who has lately joined our church by letter?”

“O, I like her tolerably well. I have not formed much acquaintance with her yet, however.”

“I can’t say that I feel any particular drawing towards her. My impressions thus far are not favorable.”

“Why, don’t you think she is a Christian?”

“Yes. I don’t know but she may be a Christian; but she is rather coarse in her manners, and withal somewhat consequential in her airs. I can’t say that I am pleased with her.”

Now, what shall we say of such a conversation as this? True, it is imagi-

nary ; and yet it may find its reality in every Christian church in the land. Can we say less than that the parties, holding it, manifest a sad want of genuine Christian love ? They admit that their sister may be a Christian ; and yet one of them directly avows not merely a want of love but a *positive dislike* ! Surely this is not loving one another as Christ loved us !

If we take a close view of the love of Christ to his disciples, we shall learn that those faults which do not extinguish the claim of a person to discipleship, ought to be no barrier to the exercise of Christian love. So long as we can discern the image of Christ in a brother or sister, however dim that image may be, however it may be surrounded by infirmities of mind or manners, we must love him. Is Christ in him ? The question is settled. I will love him, not for his failings, over which he wails with a

plaintiveness that melts his Savior's heart, but, because he is Christ's.

Doubtless there are many, who will dissent from this opinion and plead the impossibility of the thing required. "It is impossible," they say, "to love some Christians. Where there is no congeniality of taste, sentiment, or habits, there can be no affection." To this we reply : true, if a merely natural affection be meant ; but we are speaking of a gracious Christian love ; and the objection can have no weight where the parties are real Christians ; for, however diverse they may be in every other thing, they *must* as Christians possess a congeniality of feeling and affection for their common Master, and this is the root of genuine Christian love.

The example of the Savior will speedily settle this question. Did he permit the faults of his disciples to destroy his love ? Was his love founded on the

estimable qualities of the twelve rude fishermen of Galilee? or, on the broader basis of their value to his Father as immortal beings whom he loved and desired to save? Doubtless the latter, for many were the failings in the characters of the twelve, and often did they, by an exhibition of those failings, grieve the Savior's heart without destroying his love. "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" was the angry and revengeful request of James and John, when the Samaritan villagers rejected him. Did he for this unlovely exhibition of frailty discard them from his heart? No! he gently reproved them for their error and loved them still. And one day, Peter, in his worldly pride, dared to utter the bold language of rebuke to his Master's face, because he had predicted his coming sufferings! This was certainly a great offence, but did Christ dismiss him from

the charities of his heart? We know better. Or when a burst of indignation broke from the lips of the angry ten at the proud request of Zebedee's wife for her ambitious children, did he bid them depart from his side because all their spirits were, in that instance, so uncongenial with his own! O no. He only reproved and loved them still; for beneath those tumultuous stirrings of their partly subdued hearts, he discerned a love for himself, weak, but responsive and kindred to that which glowed in his own bosom for them.

Go, then, thou uncharitable man, thou fault-finding, prejudiced disciple, if indeed thou art a disciple, and sit at the feet of Jesus! See him as in the above instances, constantly overlooking the frailties and defects of his followers, loving them faithfully and perseveringly in spite of their unloveliness, their unbelief, ignorance, slowness to learn, and

selfishness of feeling; and learn from him your own duty. Hear him saying to your heart, "Love one another as I have loved you;" and then renounce your prejudices, and pray for enough of the love of Jesus to enable you to love all, who give any satisfactory evidence of being Christians.

Those persons who demand a faultless character, a perfect, or at least, a partial congeniality of feeling and habits as the conditions on which they grant their tardy love, should remember that by this very demand they *exile themselves* from the domain of Christian love. Unless, indeed, they claim an entire freedom from frailty, and consider their habits and feelings the standard of all beauty and propriety. To this latter presumption, I presume, however, no persons who make the least pretension to either common sense or Christianity, have yet arrived. All such, will admit their own

defects; and it is lamentably true that, generally, those who are the most ready to discover the failings of others, are themselves full of the most glaring faults, and the possessors of a most unamiable spirit. Now, if such persons are treated according to their own rule, they will be utterly excluded from all Christian affection. Before they plead their anti-Christian argument again, therefore, they would do well to learn a lesson from the poet who has said :

“ Go to your bosom,
Knock there ; and ask your heart, what it doth know
That's like thy brother's fault ; if it confess
A natural guiltiness, such as his is,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against thy brother's *name*.”

Let us step into yonder dwelling.
Here is a lady of sorrowful aspect, seated
at a table with a little flower vase in her
hands. See how carefully she touches
it! With what peculiar affection she

surveys it. There is a big tear-drop gathering in her eye as she fondly surveys its ornaments, and she is actually imprinting a kiss on that senseless piece of porcelain!

Can you divine the meaning of such devotion to that vase? It is not valuable, for, though it is beautifully shaped, it is cracked and broken. Its value as a vase is almost destroyed. Why then does she seem to prize it so dearly?

That woman is a bereaved mother. That cracked vase belonged to her departed daughter. Her child had kept flowers in it, all through her long and painful travel to a consumptive's grave. And when she died, she had said: "Mother, keep this vase *for my sake*."

Here is the secret of her devotion to a comparatively worthless vase. It was her child's vase. She loved her child, and now she treasures up this little relic for her sake.

Need I make an application of this figure? Has not the reader already applied it himself? Does he not here see how it is possible to love even an unamiable Christian? Though externally rude and unattractive as the broken vase, the eye of love will detect a Savior's image shining beneath. Once discerned to be precious in the sight of Christ, even such a Christian will be held dear and precious by all who love Christ. And this not for his own personal qualities, but *for the sake of Christ*, just as the mother prized the vase for the daughter's sake. Because Christ loves him and wishes him to be loved by all his friends; all true Christians will take him to their bosoms and give him their smiles and spiritual regards.

How deeply to be regretted is the fact that the visible church pays so little attention to the teachings of gospel truth on the subject of love. Christ said of

his church, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." What a beautiful idea of unity and love! Every branch proceeding from the same rich root, and bearing delicious fruit in harmony with all the rest. "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly of a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Such is God's complaint of his church. Is it not a justifiable one? Are not the branches grown fruitless and wasting their strength in silly contentions? One complains that the other is too high or too low, that another is of the wrong shape; a third runs in the wrong direction, while a fourth is too large; a fifth too knotty, and a sixth is even too fruitful to please his different companions. O shameful differences! but too faithfully exemplified in the church of God. When will each branch be faithful to its glorious root and its fellows? When will Christians

breathe the spirit of him who loved us while we were yet enemies to God, and spared not his life for our sakes? Never until they seek the baptism of the spirit of love, at the foot of the cross of Christ.

We have now shown that Christian love is love for the disciples of Christ, because Christ loves them; and because *he wishes us* to love them: and that it does not depend so much on the faithlessness of a Christian's character, as on the degree of Christ's image exhibited in his spirit and the intensity of the love of Christ in our own hearts; we shall proceed to show further that it is a *practical* and *self-denying* affection.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN LOVE EXPLAINED

"BELIEVE ME FOR THE WORK'S SAKE," was the significant reply of Christ to Philip, when his unbelieving heart led him to say ; "SHEW us the Father." It was by what he DID and not by what he *said*, that the adorable Savior declared his love for his chosen ones. There is a wonderful barrenness of verbal profession of affection in the discourses of Jesus, while his life was an unbroken series of affectionate ACTIONS. And when the Redeemer did make the occasional declarations of love that fell from his lips, they almost invariably called attention to his *doings*. How touching and beautiful

are these heavenly passages! "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd GIVETH HIS LIFE for the sheep. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS."

: Thus did the Savior show that his love was eminently and peculiarly practical; it was *costly* love; a love of many sacrifices. His whole life was love, ALL love. What was his mysterious incarnation, but a most stupendous ACT of love? It was Omnipotent Power stooping from its infinite height of glory to a union with the nature of its contemptible and rebellious creature! What was his work of teaching on the mountain slope, in the humble village synagogue, or the more splendid temple in Jerusalem? It was God making God known; it was love veiling its splendor, lest its dazzling light should blind the eyes of its pupils;

it was love such as angels never conceived, nor man ever imagined. What was Christ healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead? It was love working love's miracles! What was Christ persecuted, smitten, enduring mockery and scourging in Pilate's hall; sweating blood in Gethsemane, and suffering the fearful agonies of death on the cross? It was love's most infinite display. It was God in Christ stooping from the boundaries of his attributes to reach after his lost and wandering creatures. It was heaven loving earth with a wonderful, tearful, self-denying love.

Having loved his disciples with such a love as this, Jesus gathered them around him and bade them love one another as he had loved them! Did he mean that they were to do the same things as he had done? He could not, for they lacked the *power*. The fountain

of his love was *infinite* ; theirs was only *finite*. What then did he mean? Why, only that they should make the same use of their *finite* love as he had of his *infinite* love. In a word, as he had devoted HIMSELF to them and to their happiness, so they were to devote THEMSELVES to one another: that each disciple should possess a holy, practical, self-denying affection for the rest, which, if circumstances should demand, would sacrifice even life itself for their benefit.

An excellent brother once rose in a Love Feast, and said: "I feel no unkind feeling towards any human being." With this remark, he sat down. He meant to give expression to the love of a Christian heart. But did he do so? I think not. A heathen might say as much and be a heathen still. His profession was too negative altogether. It merely declared the absence of hate and malice. This was well. Christian love required it,

“for love worketh no ill to his neighbor.” But it also required more. It asked positive affection. Not only the absence of wrong feelings and wrong actions, but the presence of kind, affectionate feelings, and of all necessary benevolent action.

Yet how many, who bear the Christian name, rest perfectly satisfied with that brother's standard of love. While they abstain from all hostile emotion and action, they think themselves possessed of the “love of the brethren;” yet they are strangers to that real regard and that affectionate readiness to do, which we think essential to a Scriptural Christian love.

If the example of Christ was faithfully followed, we should see a wonderful change in the spirit and practice of Christians. The sick would be faithfully visited, comforted, and watched; the poor members of Christ's body would be

fed and clothed; the desponding and doubting would be comforted; the bereaved, the tempted, the tried, would meet with ready sympathy; there would be a general reciprocity of kind offices, and mutual confidence would exist in the church; the world would use the language of Turtullian, and say of Christ's disciples, "See how they love one another; and are ready to lay down their lives for each other."

There is something so divine, so heavenly, in this idea of Christian love in exercise, that it charms the imagination of the beholder. As he contemplates society acting under its blessed influence, he stands as if bound to the glorious vision by some magic spell. He is like an enraptured artist, studying the life-like pictures of some old master in his art; whose soul glows with unspeakable enthusiasm as the beautiful creations of the painter disclose their wonders to his

eyes. Under such impressions the professor of religion often utters the strongest expressions of love. His tongue is eloquent, his eyes sparkle, his thoughts breathe, his words burn. So ardent is he, that one is ready to infer his readiness to do, to suffer, to give, or even to die for his brethren in Christ Jesus. Believing this, the listener inspires the flame and looks with expectation at the subsequent conduct of the speaker, to see the wonders his love will accomplish for the church.

Such an expectation is both natural and scriptural. The tear-drops, those silent but expressive signs of feeling, that bedewed the cheeks of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, first led the Jews to exclaim, "Behold how he loved him;" but when they remembered that Christ had not done what he had obviously the power to do, they queried and said: "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind,

have caused that even this man should not have died?" But these queries were silenced, when the tears were followed by that potent word which forced the beloved Lazarus from the powerful embrace of Death! And men always judge of love by its fruit. *Action* is the body of Love, profession is but its breath. As men can best see the physical, the outward form, they naturally look, when love has uttered its voice, to see if that voice be succeeded by corresponding actions. If it is not, they must and will doubt its sincerity.

Nor is this expectation less scriptural than natural. Let the disciple of Christ ponder well the language of the Apostle John: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in **DEED**, and in truth." And again he says: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and **WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES**

FOR THE BRETHREN;" i. e., we ought to be ready, should the necessities of the church demand it, to give up our lives, as the martyrs did, for its sake. And further he adds: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" James speaks to the same purport: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;' notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit?" These tests are certainly sufficient to prove, that it is perfectly Scriptural to judge of Christian love by its ACTIONS.

Alas! alas! If this be the rule, what will become of many who are eloquent and loud in their professions of love to the children of God; but who are obviously governed by supreme selfishness?

What shall we say of thousands in Christ's visible church, whose entire outward demonstration of love, consists in the grudging donation of a few dollars per annum, to sustain the institutions of the church? Who never visit their brethren and sisters, when in poverty, sickness, or in affliction? Who take no care, and feel no concern for the spiritual distresses and trials of their fellow-Christians? Whose hands are shut, and whose purses are hermetically sealed against the beseechings of benevolence? Who sit unmoved when the missionary, the Bible distributor, the Sabbath School Teacher, stand up before them, and with tears solicit help to enable them to go on with their work and labor of love? Who shrink from the cause of Christ, when it is reproached? Who, in one word, have never SACRIFICED one penny for the benefit of the brotherhood of Jesus Christ? What, I repeat, shall we say of such?—

Are they Christians? Do they love the church as Christ loved them? Can it be possible that they possess the spirit of him whose leading characteristic was a self-denying, practical love; who went about doing good? Painfully as the answer strikes the heart, and though it sounds the everlasting death-knell of many who call themselves Christ's; truth compels us to reply, that such persons are not Bible Christians?

Let not the reader, who feels himself cut off from his claims to discipleship, by these remarks, turn away disdainfully from the further consideration of the subject! Dare not take so rash a step, dear friend! If your foundation be not a scriptural one, you should desire to know it, above all things, and that as soon as possible. There is no one thought more unspeakably dreadful, than that of a man dreaming of heaven, while he is actually in the way to hell. Can you endure the

idea of dying with a blind expectation of a welcome from the lips of Christ, and when you stand in his awful presence, be greeted with a curse? There is danger of this. Christ warns you: "MANY will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

With a prediction so plain and so terrible before your eyes, should you not review your religious experience, and bring yourself resolutely to the tests of discipleship established in the gospel? In addition to the example of Christ, and the teachings of the Apostles, permit me to present you with the practical illustrations of love afforded by the *lives* of the Apostles, and other holy men.

"I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that

myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Such was the *profession* of love for his brethren, made by the Apostle; a profession of an attachment sufficiently strong to make the largest of all sacrifices for their benefit. How did Paul support this apparently high-sounding declaration?

He supported it to the full extent of his ability to do and suffer. Did the weak consciences of his brethren lead them to indulge a foolish grievance, if Paul or his stronger converts ate meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols? Paul's love regarded the salvation of his brethren so strongly, that he exclaims, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." Were his brethren weak and troubled? His sympathy was so obvious, that he could challenge all with the question: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is of-

fended, and I burn not?" Did the prosperity of the church demand personal sufferings and severe labors at his hands? He welcomed those sufferings—he endured those labors. He could say, even when compared with others, "I am in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

These were the ACTIONS of love in the life of Paul; and when, in addition to all

this almost unequalled evidence, the well-being of the church of Christ demanded his journey to Rome, and his consequent martyrdom for the truth, he was not dismayed. With the merciless lions of the more merciless Nero gnashing their teeth in his face; with the reeking sword gleaming in his eyes, and when seated enchained in the gloom of a dungeon, he cheerfully exclaimed: "I am ready to be offered up!" Noble Paul! Christ-like Apostle! whence came this self-immolating spirit? Ah! I hear thee reply: "The love of Christ constraineth me."

Does Paul stand alone in the possession of this martyr spirit? The noble *army* of martyrs answer no! Every age has produced its multitudes of men and women, whose love for the people of God was strong and self-denying; and in modern times, greatly as this holy love is wanting in vast numbers, there are still very many who both study and imitate in

their measure, the spirit and practice of their divine Master.

This sublime self-devotion is displayed in that memorable reply of the Rev. John Smith, a once celebrated, but now deceased, preacher in the Wesleyan connection. His prodigious labors in the cause of God had well-nigh prostrated his muscular frame: his friends were alarmed. At a social meeting of several preachers, one of them, in behalf of the rest, attempted to expostulate with him, and to persuade him to use more moderation. Mr. Smith patiently listened, and when his friend ceased, he burst into tears, and replied: "What you say is all correct; I ought to put restraint on myself, but O! how can I? God has given me such a sight of the state of perishing souls, that I am broken hearted, and can only vent my feelings in the way I do.—Look round you, my brother; do you not see sinners going to hell? and when I

thus see and feel it, I am compelled to act." And he did thus act until, worn out by labors of love, his body dropped into a premature grave.

Many a modern Christian might profitably study the spirit of the Great Alfred, a Christian prince, who flourished in an age of darkness, and whose piety shines like some lone and beautiful star, shedding its solitary light on a cloudy sky. When this prince was reduced to the condition of an outcast, and while he lodged in a remote castle, a poor beggarman knocked at the castle-gate, and besought a crust of bread.

The queen found Alfred at study. She made known the beggar's wish, stating that one loaf was all their store, and it was uncertain whether their attendants, who had gone in search of food, would bring them more. Yielding to the impulses of a genuine Christian love, the Prince exclaimed: "Give him half of

our loaf!" thus setting an example of practical love which may well excite a blush of shame on the cheek of many a modern professor in the church of God.

The man who is governed by selfishness, and yet presumes to rank himself with Christ's followers, would do well to contrast himself with these specimens of Christian love in action. We have shewn that Christian love requires both the *absence* of hatred, and of all other bad feelings and desires, and the presence of a kind, soul-moving regard, exhibiting itself in self-sacrificing acts of kindness and love towards all the followers of Jesus Christ. Nor is this love to be indulged toward a few only; but toward all; not for the members of our communion merely, but for Christ's disciples, wherever they may be found, and by whatever name distinguished. He whose soul is moved by Christian love, is no man's enemy; but he is the friend of all, espe

cially of the household of Christ. He holds himself ready, to the extent of his talents and ability, for every work of mercy; he is prepared and desirous to do good, both to the souls and bodies of his fellow-Christians. He is distinguished and remarkable for this peculiar excellency of character. By this, all men know him to be Christ's disciple.

Christian reader! have you this love, this fervent charity for your brethren? Search after it; nor rest until all that is contrary to its beautiful operations, is destroyed within you. Gaze on your Master, until you are changed into his image, and you can appeal to your life, as you say to your fellow-Christians, "Brethren, I love you as Christ loved me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONQUESTS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

A CHILD once strayed from its mother's side. At first, it crawled upon the grass and laughed and played among the wild flowers that decked the green. Presently, it worked its thoughtless way to the foot of a lofty crag. An eagle seized it in his talons and bore it, screaming, to his eyrie. Its cries alarmed the mother. The neighbors heard it too, and rushed out to see the cause. Horror struck, they saw the child in the eagle's power and witnessed the monster bird depositing the precious victim in his filthy nest. Instantly two or three bold seamen attempted to scale the crag ; but were soon

compelled to abandon the hopeless task. Then the excited mother rushed up the doubtful path. Could she succeed where the iron heart and brawny arm of the sailor had failed? Breathless her neighbors watched her wild attempt. Up, up she went. Love gave her strength. From steep to steep she climbed, hanging by some slender tree or grasping the rough stones with the iron clutch of despair. At last she reached the dizzy height, clasped her frightened boy to her bosom, and descended in safety. The feat accomplished, she fell fainting to the ground. Love had conquered where superior strength had failed.

But the physical obstacle which was overcome by this devoted mother, was the smallest part of her conquest. Her love for the lost boy had subdued every other attribute of her nature to itself. It had extinguished, for the time, her natural dread of pain and her fear of

death. Every thing else gave way to love.

And this is what love is always expected to do. Solomon said: "Love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." He understood true affection to be powerful in its resistance to obstacles, and in its conquests of whatever might oppose it. And whoever has confidence in another's love, expects that love to produce exertions and efforts in its possessor, which involves many sacrifices and much noble forgetfulness of self.

This is most emphatically true of Christian love. Its source, its example, is the love of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed every thing for man, but the glory of his Father. His love extinguished from his human nature all self regard; he freely surrendered ease, pleasure and comfort; he cheerfully chose a life of

labor, persecution, poverty, and an ignominious death for his disciples' sake. If Christian love be a scion from this tree, can it bear a different fruit? If it be a stream from this fountain, can its waters possess an opposite quality?

Christian love, then, is mighty in its influences over its possessor. It extinguishes the supremacy of his natural selfishness. It seeks its own happiness through that of others. It crucifies every selfish passion. It holds every selfish desire in chains. Animated by the spirit and example of its Author, it devotes itself to the good of its Author's friends, and finds its own joys in the bliss of others:

“ It sweeps abroad, and in its search to find
Objects of mercy, goes the whole world round;
'T is like the sun, rejoicing east and west,
Or beautiful rainbow, bright from south to north.
It has an angel's pinion, mounting forth
O'er rocks and hills and seas to make men blest.”

We have already quoted the Apostle Paul as a notable example of Christian Charity. He may therefore be permitted to speak of its conquests. He knew whereof he spoke. What a list of captives he binds to the chariot of triumphing love! "Love," he says, "suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, endureth all things."

These are the trophies of love: trophies more glorious than ever adorned the triumph of any other conqueror. None but the Captain of our salvation ever presented such proofs of actual conquest. Why, the whole of depraved human nature is among them! Envy, anger, pride, ambition, hatred, malice, lust, and all evil desire. These yield to

love, and to love alone. O glorious victory! Happy is that heart in which it has been proclaimed! Blessed is that spirit in which love has built its throne and established its delightful reign! Harmony, beauty, happiness and glory are there: Christ is honored, God is glorified, and the man is fitted to be the inhabitant of Heaven.

Let us take a nearer view of these noble victories of Love. Let us examine them in detail. There is one of them so remarkable and so difficult to win that it claims a careful notice. I refer to its influence upon ENVY. This passion it totally extinguishes. I beg the reader to observe this, and not to pass hastily over the important statement of Paul. LOVE ENVIETH NOT! What! not a little, Paul? May not a Christian envy a *very little* in some particular instances? Not if he have love, for LOVE ENVIETH NOT! It cannot envy; it is contrary to

its nature to do so. Love and envy cannot dwell together. Love is fire, Envy is water. It must therefore absorb Envy, or be itself quenched by it. Love is of God; Envy is of the Devil. United therefore in the same heart they cannot be. The truth is plain beyond all successful controversy, that LOVE ENVIETH NOT!

Envy is a monster passion; an evil eye in the mind; a moral jaundice, discolored all it looks upon. It is the offspring of a most depraved selfishness. Its possessor claims to be the sole object of honor, admiration and regard; he casts a scowling eye on the prosperity of others; he frets himself at their advancement; another's praise sounds harshly on his ears; he brooks no rivals; if he suspect a rivalry in another, he becomes his bitter enemy; slander and backbiting become his instruments, and to the extent of his means, he seeks the injury of

his rival. His envy has only one limit, his own self love. When its gratification threatens to rebound on his own head, he stops and cunningly studies other modes of inflicting blows that may be felt on the object of his hate.

Is it wonderful that the Bible speaks in strong language against this passion? That it says, "Envy is the rottenness of the bones." It even classes it with the worst of sin. The Apostle Paul calls it a work of the flesh. "For the works of the flesh are ENVYINGS, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like." And James writes, "Where ENVYING and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

Can it be possible then for a man imbued with Christian love, to be envious? Can a passion so fearfully stigmatized, and so strongly condemned by the Holy Ghost, co-exist with that lovely affection for the children of God, which charac-

terizes all who are born of the Spirit? A man must have taken leave of common sense, to answer these questions affirmatively. Envy is the destruction of love, and if the reader be envious of his brethren and sisters in the church of God, he is solemnly assured he is a stranger to genuine Christian love.

Saul, the first monarch of the Jewish nation, is an example of a victim to this hateful passion. Tall and stately in his person; of royal and noble bearing; placed by the divine choice at the head of God's selected nation; he, of all others, had no cause for envy. But when the stripling shepherd returned from victorious battle with the giant foe, whose massive strength even Saul himself had not dared to meet; and when the daughters of Israel sang in triumph that Saul had slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands; then, Saul's selfish heart spoke out. He listened and was con-

quered. Envy filled his beclouded soul. He sought his rival's life. By every wily stratagem, at first; and then with royal force he endeavored to procure his destruction. He drove him into exile; hunted him like a beast in the wilderness; proscribed him as a traitor at home! Nor did he cease his bitter envyings until God utterly departed from him and left him to perish untimely by the hands of the Philistines.

Again I ask, if this hateful passion can exist in a heart that is sprinkled with the baptism of Christ? Was Saul like Jesus Christ? Neither is an envious man; though he profess the religion of the Savior. If we envy, we cannot love one another as Christ loved us.

But are there no signs of envy among those who profess to be Christians? Alas! where is the church in which these weeds are not growing? Where is the people among whom this deadly

poison is not doing its work of death? Are there not many who envy their fellow professors; and who, nevertheless, do not doubt their own Christianity? The lips that bless, curse also and feel no self-condemnation; and thus shew a sad want of conscience on a vital point.

Let us look at a few specimen facts. There is Eugenius. He represents a class of members in the Christian church, who, though somewhat active in many of its departments, are nevertheless very imperfect in their characters. But let us observe Eugenius a moment.

He is at a prayer meeting: that place where he professes to meet God. A brother is called upon, by the person who has charge of the meeting, or by the minister, to pray. Immediately an ill-concealed frown gathers on the brow of Eugenius. His enjoyment is destroyed. He wishes the meeting over. Why this?

He felt slighted. The imaginary attention paid to his fellow-laborer excited his envy. Had *he* received the supposed honor, he would have enjoyed the meeting. He always feels in this manner when others receive personal attentions which are not *first* offered to himself.

The meeting is over, and Eugenius retires with the rest. "Well, Br. Eugenius, how did you enjoy the meeting to-night?" inquires a pious brother.

"I did not see any thing special to enjoy," is the retort.

"Indeed! it has been a truly refreshing season to me."

"Well, I get tired of hearing the same persons all the time. There is Br. Z., who is always pushing himself forward. He thinks there is no one so able as himself."

"You are uncharitable, brother."

"No, I am not. I know Z. well. He wants to be first in every thing; and if he

can't be, he wont be any thing. I like to see equality among brethren."

"So do I. And I see no inequality among us. We all have the same privileges as Br. Z. if we choose to use them."

"I do n't see it so. And I do n't intend to let Br. Z., or any other brother, lord it over me. I believe in Christian equality."

It is very clear from this suppositious conversation, that whatever Eugenius believes of equality, he needs to believe more in brotherly love. How plainly the prejudiced eye of envy appears! And how obvious the truth that the class of persons represented by Eugenius are violaters of the New Commandment!

In pursuing the evidences of a want of Christian love further, let me call attention to the depreciating remarks which but too commonly drop from the lips of Christian females, concerning each other. One has a new dress. "How extravagant!" exclaims envy, and the speaker

purposes, that same instant, to purchase one for herself more extravagant still. Another has some addition to her household furniture. "She is looking up in the world! She will have company soon to show her fine things," cries envy again, while in her heart, the speaker longs for the same means of display. A third is the subject of praise. Envy replies, "You don't know her so well as I do. She is not all she appears to be."

Now what shall be said of such remarks as these? Allow much for thoughtlessness, still the truth stares you in the face, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:" the inference is irresistible, that these envious fruits have an envious source, and that the new commandment is not kept by multitudes of nominal Christians.

Again, Christian reader, let me solemnly appeal to your conscience! Are you not the subject of these envyings in

your heart, if indeed you do not give them expression on the tongue? See then how strangely inconsistent this envy is with that sublime, holy, self-denying love enjoined upon you by the authority of Jesus Christ. Love delights in the happiness and prosperity of others; yea, it rejoices to contribute to their honor and enjoyment. Love glories to see its objects increasing in every desirable good. Does not a mother identify her own happiness with the prosperity of her son? Can you fret her feelings by telling how rich, how honored, how beautiful, or how fortunate is her child? No! Such intelligence delights her. And if you were the possessor of Christian love, would you not rejoice at the wealth, honor, happiness or praise of others? Cast forth, then, that hateful monster, Envy, from your bosom. God alone can reveal how much you have already endured from its abominable presence.

Remember that Charity envieth not. Give due heed to the Apostolic exhortation, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and ENVIES, and all evil-speakings, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" and do this the more because God hath written of the envious that "they shall see and BE ASHAMED FOR THEIR ENVY at the people."

CHAPTER V.

THE CONQUESTS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

AMONG the many spectacles of moral sublimity presented in Bible history, I know of none superior to the tragic death of Stephen, the first martyr. Dragged with violence before the lordly, Jewish Sanhedrim, maliciously charged with blasphemy by false witnesses, he stands confronted with his powerful enemies! How striking the contrast between them! They, clothed with authority and official dignity, yet exhibiting the ferocious tempers of a chained fiend; he, a poor undefended prisoner, yet presenting the lofty bearing and dazzling innocence of an angel! How noble his brave and manly

defence! But what fierce passions it sets astir in their dark breasts! They gnash at him with their teeth! They utter violent cries of rage! They stop their ears! They rush tumultuously upon him, drag him with merciless wrath without the city, and there cruelly commence the work of stoning him to death!

Behold the martyr! Not a gleam of unholy passion lights his eyes; not a drop of angry blood swells his veins. Lo! he kneels with his last remaining strength, and amidst a deadly shower of stones, cries with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

This was the triumph of Christian love over human nature! A practical illustration of a truth subsequently propounded by the apostle Paul, "LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED."

This is the aspect in which we now desire to present Christian love. As oil smoothes the surface of the waters on

which it may be cast, so true Christian affection keeps the natural temper unruffled; it silences the voice of anger, prevents hardness of feeling, and enables its possessor to endure the frailties, the infirmities, and even the sins of his brethren, without being provoked or excited to angry, bitter feelings.

There are many professing Christians who feel enraptured as they study the forbearing love of Stephen, and other noble confessors of Christ, and yet indulge bitter, acrimonious feelings in their hearts, towards their fellow Christians. What greater hindrance is there to the work of God than a want of *unity* in the church? And what is a want of unity but the *presence* of alienations, heart-burnings and bitterness? Disguise it as we may, this is the sober truth. Love will compel unity, with its delightful force, wherever it exists, but if this sweet compulsion be resisted, it immediately

expires. Disunion is the death of love.

The worst feature of this evil is, that many professing Christians believe they may have hardness in their hearts, and yet retain the smile of God. They even cling to their enmities with the tenacity of despair, and defend them with an earnestness worthy of a better cause. Go to a brother or sister of this cast, and something like the following dialogue may pass between you :

“Brother A. there seems to be some hardness between you and Brother B. Is it not possible to remove it?”

“Yes, there is, but it is not my fault. I have no wish to injure the brother, I am sure.”

“But you do injure him by withholding your love from him, and by exhibiting the feelings you possess.”

“I can’t help it. Who can love a disagreeable man? If that brother was

what he ought to be, I should love him."

"But you are bound to love him on Christ's account."

"I don't believe he is a Christian. He does not manifest a Christian spirit."

"Still you are bound to love him. Christ says to his disciples, 'Love your enemies.'"

"When he is humble I will love him. He has not used me like a gentleman, and I can't like him until he asks my forgiveness."

"But perhaps he is not aware of having offended you."

"Well, he has, and I can't feel right towards him."

"But, my brother! how can you retain the favor of God with these hard feelings?"

"I enjoy my mind very well, and don't think there is any thing wrong in my feelings towards Brother B. He has in-

jured me ; he shows a proud spirit ; and I am not going to yield to him until he yields to me."

Is this dialogue a caricature ? Would to God it were ! It is but too true a picture of life. Its fac simile is to be found almost every where. Thousands, if they were to read it, might be disposed to judge themselves the originals of this but too faithful portrait.

The fact is indisputable, that many break the law of love and feel guiltless, nay, they even justify themselves. Why does this self-deception exist ? The great reason is, that the parties do not see the scope nor understand the genius of the gospel on the subject of love.

Yet how plain are its teachings, "LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED !" or, as our best critical commentator, Clarke, observes, "*Is not provoked ; is not irritated ; is not made sour or bitter.*" "How the word easily," he adds, "got into our

translation, it is hard to say; but however it got in it is utterly improper, and has nothing in the original to countenance it." Again, after furnishing learned proof of his statement, he continues: "The common version of this text destroys the meaning of the Apostle. If *love* is *provoked* at all, then it ceases to be love. When the man who possesses this love gives way to provocation, he loses the balance of his soul and grieves the Spirit of God. However favorably we may think of our own state, and however industrious we may be to find out excuses for sallies of passion, still the testimony of God is, 'Love is not provoked;' and if I have not such a love, whatever else I may possess, it profiteth me nothing."

That this is the correct understanding of the Apostle is placed beyond dispute by his own words in another verse. "Love," he says, "*beareth all things.*"

Love *endureth all things!* However wrong the treatment; however long it continues; however aggravated and painful, genuine Christians walk 'with all lowliness and meekness; with long suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another.'" They remember the words of Jesus, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; resist not evil!" Nothing can provoke them to revenge. Even insult fails where true grace triumphs. Turenne, once Marshal of France, and a truly brave man, is an example. A young sprig of nobility had taken offence at some professional act of the Marshal's, and challenged him to fight a duel. The Marshal declined by maintaining a dignified silence. The revengeful noble, resolved on provoking his unresisting enemy to a conflict, approached him in a public place and deliberately spit in his face. This was a provocation

indeed. Proud men, whose false education taught them that such an insult could only be washed out with blood, were the witnesses. Did the Marshal feel resentment? For a brief moment his nature felt. The indignant blood rushed to his face; his hand involuntarily grasped his sword. But it was only for a moment. The Marshal remembered his principles; his religion spoke out, and he obeyed its speaking. Taking out his handkerchief, he wiped away the spittle, and remarked, "Young man! could I as easily wipe your blood from my conscience, as I can this spittle from my face, I would kill you on the spot. Go, sir!" Considering the age in which Turenne lived, his position, and the character of the insult, this reply is one of the most remarkable instances of forbearance on record. For offences infinitely smaller, there are many professing Christians who have unsheathed the

sword of their anger, and for years have followed their victims with unrelenting hatred; totally forgetful of the sweet spirit of their professed Master, and of their obligation to be as near like to him as disciple can be like his Lord.

And now, dear reader, let me affectionately exhort you to consider this topic carefully: especially, if you are the subject of variances and strifes; of bitterness and bad feeling. Settle it in your mind, for the truth is clear, that, if you are indulging bitterness towards any creature, either in or out of the church, you have lost the divine favor; you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Go, forthwith to your closet, confess your sin to God. Go! by your soul's price I entreat you. Go! be reconciled to your brother, and henceforth pray to be a living illustration of the truth that love is never provoked.

There is yet another conquest of

Christian love deserving serious consideration. It effectually destroys that depraved habit of suspicion and evil surmising which reigns so absolutely in the unrenewed heart. This is manifestly taught by Paul. "Love," he says, "THINKETH NO EVIL. Love believeth all things. Love hopeth all things."

The natural heart begets the most uncharitable judgments of men. One of its favorite mottoes is: "Believe every man a rogue until you are convinced of the contrary." A motto which, if universally acted upon, would convert the world into a miniature hell. It is the smoke of Tophet rising from man's invincible depravity; blinding his eyes to the sight of virtue, and giving its own black hues to every surrounding object. It animates the worst dispositions of nature; attributes bad motives to good acts, and beholds a fancied resemblance to its depraved self in all its species.

Love destroys this disposition; it reverses this horrible motto. True Christian love compels its possessor never to believe evil of his brother, unless it is visible. It demands irrefragable evidence before it condemns. If the act be made certain, and a good motive can be supposed, love searches for that motive. If evil reports are circulated, love *hopes* they are false; or if they are true, that they are not so bad as represented, and when their existence and bad character are made sure, love will plead the aggravations and extraordinary provocations of the case, and, with a heart deeply affected, set about the reformation of the offender.

There is a beautiful simplicity in Christian love. It realizes Christ's idea of his disciples being like a little child. Behold that little boy! He is leaning upon his mother's knee, his face turned upward, gazing intently upon her. The

mother is telling the child of heaven and its beauties. The child hears all, believes all ; raises no doubt, nor questions once the truth of his parent's word. To his unsophisticated soul, all becomes real truth, and he rejoices in the hope, if he is good, of wearing a crown of gold, and walking in a robe of light along the streets of God's holy city.

Thus will Christian love believe all (good) things of "the brethren," with unquestioning simplicity. It wishes and consequently believes such things true. It has no eye to see a worm within the fruit ; no heart to fancy rottenness in the bones beneath the cheek of health ; no mind to discern hypocrisy in a well-sustained profession of faith in Christ. It "*hopeth* all things," and persists in hoping until judgment lays a finger on its lips and commands it to hope no more.

By these remarks it is not meant that Christian love winks at real sin, or with-

holds sharp rebukes from actual offenders. This would not accord with the example of our blessed Lord. He could say to his Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan!" He could deal out severe anathemas on incorrigible offenders. Love can follow this example in its degree, and yet, in the true spirit of the Great Shepherd, seeking his own lost sheep, obey the apostolic requisition: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

But it is meant, that with respect to all conduct not decidedly sinful—all actions whose character admits of different motives, or which may proceed from errors and mistakes of judgment—love takes the favorable side; it uniformly regards all conduct in others as innocent, until it is *demonstrated* to be guilty.

This being the case, "Love biteth not with the tongue." He who is imbued with Christian love, "*speaketh evil of no person*;" no, not even of an avowed enemy. Slander and back-biting he abhors as he would an adder. True or false, he never propagates evil surmises or sayings concerning others. He carefully avoids all remarks upon his fellow disciples, that would degrade their characters or diminish their influence. The good name of others is as precious to him as his own. He speaks of all his fellow-laborers in Christ as a mother of her children; and as she can discover something excellent and admirable, even in her homeliest babe, so can he, whose soul is full of love, see something to praise in the least attractive of his Master's followers.

How lovely is this aspect of Christian Love! What a desirable — yea, what an Eden-like home would Christ's church

be, if its members uniformly displayed this spirit! There are some who do possess it, and they have their reward. They are, as the noblest trees in a forest, attracting universal admiration. They are as the choicest flowers in a garden, praised by every observer. They are odoriferous plants, whose delicious fragrancy delights both Christ and his saints! But alas! how few comparatively are such disciples! What multitudes surround them, whose tongues make "hard speeches: boast great things," and are "unruly evils, full of deadly poison." Go into their society, and what is their theme of conversation? Character! Persons! These sacred things they treat as uncereemoniously and with as little feeling, as the anatomist treats the body under dissection. Words are uttered, which, if known to the parties they concern, would wound them to the quick and make their hearts bleed with anguish.

Judgments are pronounced which, if true, ought to exclude the persons from the church of God. And why is all this done? O shame! It is done for the pleasure it affords! Professing Christians gloat over a prostrate character, as vultures over blood! They take unholy delight in an unholy task! No wonder they complain of leanness and confess unfaithfulness to their profession; but it will be wonderful if such violaters of the law of love ever find a place in heaven, without deep contrition.

Such conversations often result seriously and painfully. Much as Christ's body has suffered by the persecutions of the wicked, it may be reasonably questioned if it has not suffered incalculably more by the unlovely and unloving habits of its own members. Many a church is filled with distractions and divisions, through this pestilent habit of backbiting and evil speaking. Words

are sharp swords, and Christ is wounded in the house of his friends.

A forcible example of the bad effects of uncharitable remark, is furnished in the life of that eminent man of God, Richard Watson, who, in his day, was one of the brightest stars in the firmament of Wesleyan Methodism. He had expressed his mind somewhat freely upon certain doctrinal points. Some persons, who did love him, spread a report that he had embraced the Arian heresy. Others, lacking a spirit of charity, believed this report without inquiry. When the unsuspecting brother went as usual to preach on his circuit, the chapel was closed against him, and his former friends refused him a night's lodging.

All this was manifestly a violation of the law of love. The report, and its belief *without inquiry*, were both alike contrary to love. What was the result? It very nearly caused the extinguishment of

that great light of Methodism. Mr. Watson was young, he possessed great loftiness of mind, and under the impulse of strong resentment, withdrew from the work of God, and retired into private life for upwards of two years. It is surprising he was not wholly lost to the church.

It is sometimes objected to this claim for charity concerning others, that if obeyed it would subject us to the duplicity and deceptions of designing men. These, it is said, would easily impose upon such charity and make the godly man their dupe.

This is a possible result of a noble Christian love, no doubt. But I think it would not be a frequent one. As extreme weakness is often the best defence against superior strength — for where is the *man* who would undertake to fight a child — so genuine affection is the best protection from deception. Vice quails and blushes in the presence of genuine

virtue, and is rarely disposed to take the advantage. Besides, the deception cannot last long. The rule of love is reciprocal. And what binds one to kindness, also obliges the other. So that a deceiver, lacking the fruits of love, would speedily forfeit his claim to the confidence and special regards of Christian charity.

But if it were not so, still we are bound to obey our blessed Master. We had better be deceived occasionally, than to omit the courtesies of love to a real disciple. The cup of water given in the name of a disciple will have its reward, though given by honest mistake to a devil; while it would be a painful mistake, through a habit of cold suspicion, to repulse and distract *one* beloved disciple of our common Lord.

Mr. Wesley illustrates this principle by a remarkable fact. In his sermon on Dives and Lazarus, he says, "At Epworth

in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the market place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying, She was very hungry. The master bid her begone, for a lazy jade. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying she was very thirsty. She had much the same answer. At a third door she begged a little water, saying, She was very faint. But she was repulsed here also. The boys seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow balls. She looked up, lay down, and died."

Would it not be better to relieve a hundred undeserving beggars, than to turn away so needy a creature and have her die on your door step? So also it is better to have charity for many guilty, than, by a habit of cold suspicion, to shut out the real followers of Christ from the bowels of our compassion.

Seek, therefore, beloved reader, to be fully possessed of the "love of the brethren." Study its broad requirements, abstain from its violation, and spread an influence of affectionate kindness through whatever sphere you may occupy in this world of sin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

AMONG the poems of Wordsworth there is one which cannot be read without a tear. It is called, "The Sailor's Mother," and is a versification of a most affecting incident. A matron, past her prime, tall and majestic in her person, meets the poet. He is struck with the dignity she displays, and while secretly admiring her appearance, is surprised to hear her solicit alms. Perceiving something carefully protected from the foggy air by her cloak, he inquires the nature of her burden. She displays a tiny singing bird, and relates how she had a son who had long sailed upon the seas. Recently he

had perished on the coast of Denmark, and she had travelled many weary miles on foot to see if "aught which he had owned might still remain for her." She had found this bird. It was her son's bird, she said ; it had gone many voyages with him ; he loved it. When last he sailed, he had left it to a friend's care. There she had found it ; the only relic of her lost son. And because he loved that singing bird, she had, in weariness and trial, borne it towards her home. She had protected it with all the care of love.

How forcibly does this beautiful fact illustrate the *kindness* of love. That mother loved her son, and that affection had led her to a self-sacrificing *kindness*, and when *he* no longer lived to receive it, she exercised it on his bird ! Kindness is the first born of love !

"*Love is KIND ;*" it "suffereth long ;" it "doth not behave itself unseemly ;" it

“vaunteth not itself.” These features belong to it; they characterize it; kindness of spirit; mildness of speech; meekness of manner; gentleness of behavior, are its legitimate fruits as described in Holy Writ.

A Christian will manifest his love to the brethren by the *spirit of kindness* which will characterize his intercourse with them. The heart will, in spite of itself, find expression in the manners. If hatred, sourness, envy or suspicion has a temple there, it will be visible in the cold stateliness or the forbidding severity of the outer man. If Love sways its sceptre on the heart's throne, its empire will be extended to the outward manners. The mild eye, the speaking feature, the softened tones of voice will be cheerful witnesses of its inward dominion. If the heart loves, I repeat, that love will work itself out in rills of kindness to refresh and bless the world.

Still, it must be admitted concerning some, that they, either naturally or by education, have acquired a restraint and stiffness of manners, which to strangers assumes the appearance of pride and unkindness. This is certainly unfortunate, since it often produces a wrong impression of their real feelings. But a heart imbued with Christian love, will discover this, and will labor diligently to overthrow it. It will *train* itself, so that, if it does not wholly overcome, it will so modify it, that a short acquaintance will suffice to dissipate the first impression, and to convince all its acquaintances that beneath those restrained manners, there dwells a soul warmed with the genuine fire of the Savior's love.

The unrenewed heart prompts a cold reserve towards all, who do not suit its tastes, or who may chance to offend its pride. Harsh speeches, unkind, ungenerous remarks, are the loathsome fruits

of this unholy root. Either forgetting, or not caring to know, that biting words are daggers to the sensitive mind, it constantly employs them, and thus with unsparing zeal, inflicts wounds that time cannot always heal. Love cannot imitate this example, for it never retaliates; it is always *kind*. It can utter hard speeches no more than it can use sharp swords. Love considers the *feelings* of its objects; it would rather be wounded itself than wound others.

It must be sorrowfully confessed, that this proof of Christian love is a beauty rarely loved as it deserves. Many religionists, worthy in some respects, are sadly deficient here. They speak *unkindly* to other Christians; they use *harsh words* to their children, domestics and acquaintances. In this way, many a life is embittered, which, otherwise, might be happy; many a heart left bleeding, which might be healed.

O, that Christians would think of these things! O that they would sternly resolve never to let a harsh word drop from their tongues! Let me adjure thee, Christian reader, in the words of a female poet,* to

“ *Speak not harshly*, — much of care
Every human heart must bear ;
Enough of shadows sadly play,
Around the very sunniest way ;
Enough of sorrows darkly lie,
Veiled within the merriest eye.”

* * * * *

“ Think not that he doth not feel, —
That his soul is cased in steel :
Though no passion fires his eye,
Though he hears without reply, —
Or a cold and careless smile,
Lingers on the lip the while.
Many a bitter pang doth pride
Or a Christian patience hide ;
That he *bears* uncomplainingly,
Offers no excuse for thee.

* Miss Fletcher.

“ *Speak not harshly, — there may yet
Come an hour of wild regret,
When with deep and bitter wailing,
And with anguish unavailing,
Thou beside thy dying friend,
May for pardon lowly bend ;
Do no act that thou wilt rue
In the moment of adieu,
Speak no word thou ’lt wish unsaid,
When thy friend is with the dead.*”

There is an unscriptural opinion among multitudes of professing Christians, that greatly hinders them in the practice of Christian kindness. They imagine that, if they do not maintain self-respect by manifesting a considerable degree of *spirit*, they shall be despised and trampled upon by others. This is a mistake. Self-respect is not maintained by exhibition of spirit, or, what is nearer the truth, of bad temper : the best and surest method is to avoid *mean actions*, which is the only sure way of promoting self-respect and securing the

esteem of others. Ebullitions of temper may serve to secure us from the approaches of men, but never can command their respect. They will *avoid*, but not *esteem* us. Any man who sets out to gain the regards of a community by contumely and haughtiness, will reap nothing but a harvest of contempt. But let him act on the principles of Holy Writ and he will succeed; for depraved as men are, they cannot help admiring the love which is "*peaceable, GENTLE, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*" Though they themselves will not adopt, they will praise the precept which says, "*Love as brethren, be pitiful, BE COURTEOUS, NOT RENDERING EVIL FOR EVIL, OR RAILING FOR RAILING, but contrariwise blessing;*" and again, that other blessed advice, "*If thine enemy be hungry give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty give him water to drink; for thou shalt*

heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." These are the rules for the action of the Christian, and if their practice should fail of securing him respect, he is no less bound to observe them. They are the laws of his Master, and by them he is bound to walk—and far better is the smile of God than the praise of men.

But, as before observed, the *kindness* of Christian love will secure both the approbation of God and the affections of men. There is a *power*, a wonderful *power* in kindness which the Christian church has never yet fully tested. Human experience is one great volume of facts, all showing that kindness is stronger than a lion, sharper than a sword. Kindness will subdue where force fails. The heart that will resist violence even unto death, will sink in quiet submission at the feet of kindness.

Among many facts which might be

brought to illustrate this truth, I select the following. A very idle, incorrigible boy was once introduced to a school, with a statement from the parents of his bad qualities. Flogging, severe discipline, parental authority, had all failed to move him ; he remained a source of sorrow to his friends and of fear to the neighborhood.

His new teacher speedily found out the truth of this representation. Idle, daring, fearless of punishment, the boy was a source of extreme trouble to his mind. But the teacher watched him and studied his character carefully. One day he saw him separate two boys of unequal size, and heard him tell the larger one to fight with one of his own age if he wanted to fight, and not be so mean as to select a smaller one than himself. At another time, he saw him enter the school with his pockets filled with apples. The other boys soon clustered around him,

and many voices cried, "William, give me an apple!" He freely distributed the whole, and then when a little fellow approached him with the same request, he said, as he searched his empty pockets, "I wish I had one for you, but I have not."

These facts convinced the teacher that the lad had a generous nature, which, if it could be brought into action, would yet redeem his character. He resolved to appeal to it the first opportunity. So, shortly after, when William violated a rule of the school while a class was in the act of recitation, the teacher called him to his side, intending at first to apply the rod. But, remembering his purpose, he kept him standing at his side until the class retired. He then took the offender to his desk and threw his left arm round the boy's neck. This made him look wonderingly, as if he would have said, "What is to come now?"

The teacher addressed him in a low tone: "William," said he, "you are a strange boy, I don't know what to make of you. You will be a bright man or a very bad one, and I fear the latter. Yet, there are some good things about you, William." He then told him that he had observed him separating the boys and distributing the apples. He went on in this strain of kind rebuke for some time, until he saw the tears gathering in William's eyes. He then asked him if he would be a good boy. "I will try, sir," was the lad's answer, as he vainly endeavored to suppress his tears. With streaming eyes he retired to his seat, conquered by words of kindness.

From that time William was a changed boy. He became as obedient as he had been rebellious; he grew to manhood, a comfort to his parents, an ornament to society.

Such is the influence of kindness. It

is irresistible. Every follower of Christ should therefore aim to possess it. He should let his heart grow in love, and study to mould his speech and manners after the pattern of love and kindness furnished in the life of Jesus Christ.

There is yet another offspring of Christian love claiming our attention, which must not be overlooked. I allude to the *spirit of forgiveness*, which it uniformly produces, in proportion to its dominion over the heart.

I have already said that love does not take offence at *imaginary* wrongs. Looking always, towards all with an unsuspicious eye, thinking no evil, it cannot see injuries, as thousands do—where they do not exist. It is even very slow to perceive them when they are actually inflicted. But when this existence is made certain it is not stirred up to bitterness and wrath: it utters no threats, seeks no revenge, inflicts no retaliating blow.

Like its lovely exemplar, it quietly and meekly bears all injury, from the unfaithfulness of a Peter, to the insults of a Roman soldier.

Peter, while a mere neophyte in the school of Jesus, learned enough of his teacher's spirit to see that the first business of a Christian disciple, after being injured by another, is to *forgive* him. Hence, he came to the Savior with the question, "*Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*" Here Peter showed his discernment of the operations of love in the matter of forgiveness, but his untutored heart had not yet learned the absolute unweariedness of love. What can be more sublime than Christ's memorable answer?—an answer that deserves to be written in letters of gold: "I SAY NOT UNTO THEE UNTIL SEVEN TIMES, BUT UNTIL SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN."

Now what is the ordinary conduct of

religious men, when injured by their brethren? I speak not here of those noble souls—those peers in the church of God, who, steeped in their Master's spirit, endure wrongs after his heavenly example—but of professing Christians generally. How do they suffer injuries? Let us pencil a sketch from life.

Parmenio in some way injures Aspasio. I will suppose the injury to be real and positive: some actual wrong, as slander or fraud. How does Aspasio receive the information? Its first effect is to excite a powerful storm in his bosom. His mind is agitated and presently his heart gives birth to many a bitter thought. "Parmenio," it says, "is a hypocrite. He is among the worst of men. He shall suffer for this. I will expose him publicly. I will wound him in the sorest place. I'll see that he is expelled from the church!" These and similar thoughts are allowed to gallop uncurbed through his soul. Is

it wonderful if they trample down Christian love, with every other grace of the Holy Spirit? This is the instantaneous effect, and Aspasio has a dim consciousness that his peace is gone and the face of his Savior thickly veiled.

What does Aspasio do next? He must either come to himself, repent of this inward storm and seek the restoration of his brother, as Christian love would prompt, or he must take another step in the wrong path. Sin will not let a man be still, but like a true taskmaster whips his victim onwards. So Aspasio goes abroad with his complaint. He makes hard speeches concerning Parmenio. He goes to all but the offender himself, and if, at last, he brings the matter before the church, it is in such a manner, as makes Parmenio's restoration impossible.

What does Aspasio gain by all this? Much, very much, for sin pays large wages. But these wages are paid in

misery and death. Aspasio fails of restoring the wrong-doer to righteousness; he loses his own Christian influence; he forfeits the favor of Christ and becomes either a hypocrite or a backslider. THE LOSS OF TWO SOULS OFTEN FOLLOWS AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT IN A PROFESSING CHRISTIAN! for, I believe in many such cases both parties fall into perdition.

Can this conduct consist with Christian love? Never! Heaven may pass away and the pillars of righteousness that uphold God's throne dissolve, as soon. Love delights in forgiveness; it glories in pardoning the worst offender.

The operation of Christian love when it has sustained an injury is graphically described by the adorable Savior. He shews it on the first knowledge of the injury, flying, in the ardor of its kindly feeling, to gain the offender. "IF THY BROTHER SHALL TRESPASS AGAINST THEE, GO AND TELL HIM HIS FAULT

BETWEEN THEE AND HIM ALONE; IF HE SHALL HEAR THEE THOU HAST GAINED THY BROTHER."

Thou hast gained thy brother! Here the heart of love is revealed. It goes weeping to the trespasser, to woo him from his sin by kind entreaty. If it should fail in this pious attempt, still its work is not finished. Let the Master speak again:

"BUT IF HE WILL NOT HEAR THEE, THEN TAKE WITH THEE ONE OR TWO MORE, THAT IN THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY WORD MAY BE ESTABLISHED."

Blessed arrangement, to snatch a wandering brother from the hands of the arch adversary! Could any man resist the importunity of such pleading love! Surely, but few would restrain their penitence! Still, some might do so, and then love takes its final step.

"IF HE SHALL NEGLECT TO HEAR

THEM, TELL IT UNTO THE CHURCH, BUT IF HE NEGLECT TO HEAR THE CHURCH, LET HIM BE UNTO THEE AS A HEATHEN MAN AND A PUBLICAN."

'This is the climax of love's efforts. It carries the offender before the church, not for punishment, but that he may hear the church and be prevailed upon to repent. But if he be still obstinate, love does not forsake him. Though it can no longer cleave to him as a brother in Christ, it will follow him *as a man*, with its pity and regard, its kindness and sympathy. As the good Samaritan loved the bruised and dying Jew, as Christ loves the world of mankind, so will the true disciple still love this incorrigible offender.

In this process for the recovery of a sinning brother, love will not be *exacting*. It will not require a minute confession, a deep and crushing humiliation. Some religionists are satisfied with nothing less

than the uttermost farthing, the last fragment of the pound of flesh ! This is not love's spirit. Only let a single tear moisten the eye, a word of acknowledgment pass the lip, love is satisfied ; it will proceed at once to wipe the eye, to kiss the cheek, to give the warm embrace. And in its readiness to do this, it will accomplish more for the real humiliation of the offender than in any other way. Love is contagious ; it begets love, and hard must be the heart that can resist its influence.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW TO ATTAIN CHRISTIAN LOVE.

I HAVE now shown the nature and effects of Christian charity. The commandment has, in the process of examination, shown itself to be exceeding broad, and the reader has, perhaps, said to his misgiving heart, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He may even have felt deeply condemned, and guilty of various infractions of the glorious law of love, and, in self-despair, exclaimed, Woe is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips.

God be thanked, my dear reader, if this result has been gained. I do not mean to thank God for your guilt, but

for your conviction of guilt! This is a subject of joy. The Prodigal Son would never have worn the best robe, nor tasted the feast of reconciliation, had he not *first come to himself*, and cried, "I will arise and go to my father." Be thankful, therefore, for this conviction! Beware how you shake it off! Do not heal the wound slightly; it is deadly and will break out again. Bad as is the loathsome cancer, eating its tardy way to the seat of life, and mercilessly destroying the features of beauty, yet I seriously assure you, that you had better have a cancer than an uncharitable heart; *that* can eat only to the springs of mortality; *this* defaces the soul, deforms the beauty of the spirit, and renders you loathsome in the sight of God.

How blessed then, that gracious interposition of God, which has shown you this sin! Had you died with an unloving heart, you had certainly gone quick to

hell, notwithstanding all your pretensions and prayers! While that heart has ruled you, you have been hanging over the pit of destruction; deluded by a dream of heaven! Miserable delusion! Happy conviction that dissipates the false vision and fills you with trembling anxiety henceforth to keep the royal law of love.

How may we fulfil the law of love? Is it possible to love all Christians as Christ loved us? To avoid all violations of the new commandment? Who doubts the *possibility* of such obedience? Who *can* doubt it without charging God with being a hard master? Is it not commanded? Would HE require impossibilities? Enough; universal love is commanded, and with the command, there are—there must be—means promised and made sure to the believer, by which he may fulfil it to the uttermost.

What are those means?

It has been repeatedly remarked in the

preceding pages, that true Christian charity is the fruit or offspring of love for the Lord Jesus: that its existence and intensity do not depend on aught in the Christian, but the image of Christ; and that it is exercised on Christ's account, or for his sake.

This being allowed, it clearly follows, that to keep the law of love, we must be filled with the love of Christ; and that just in proportion to the coldness or intensity of our affection for Jesus Christ, will be our love for the brethren. The love of Christ is the fountain which, living in the heart, sends forth abundant streams of universal charity.

Here, then, is the true method of fulfilling the law of love. We must go to the Cross of Christ! We must study the attractions of Divine love, until our souls are enraptured and captivated by their glorious beauty. We must bind our souls to the holy spot, until they are drawn by

its allurements to consecrate themselves as living sacrifices on the altar, Christ. Then, he will fill us with his Spirit; our wills will be lost in his; he will transmute our natures into his own likeness; and love for the brethren will follow as naturally as branches from the vine, or as a tree from its root. Consecration to Christ, and conformity to his nature;—in a word, to seek to have Christ in us the hope of glory—is the true method of obtaining power to fulfil the law of love.

To this effect is the word of Christ: “Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they may all be one: as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

In this beautiful fragment from the sacerdotal prayer of Christ, the communication of Christ's glory or image to his disciples is recognized to be essential to their perfect oneness, or union in love for each other. "THE GLORY WHICH THOU GAVEST ME, I HAVE GIVEN THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE;" which is as if he had said; I have communicated to my disciples the glorious privilege of becoming Sons of God, that being all adopted children of the same Father, they may abide in peace, love, and unity:* hence, if the Christian would grasp the full privileges of his sonship, he would find himself the possessor of Christian love as a necessary sequence.

Go then, beloved reader, if you have learned your lack of Christian charity,

* See Clarke's Commentary, John 17, 22. ➤

and bow down before Christ's mercy seat—confess with tears and heart-agony your unlikeness to him. Be willing to part with all your idols, sins, and follies. Be a whole offering, a living sacrifice on a living altar. Doubt not your acceptance, and the promise will be fulfilled. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." That new spirit will be one of love to God and to all mankind, especially to the household of faith.

Particular attention to this duty will still be found necessary, notwithstanding this self-consecration. There is so much misapprehension of the true standard of love; there are so many departures from its spirit and practice, in persons who possess many excellencies of character, that, without being aware of the steps by which he descends, a Christian may find himself again beneath the altar, and His sacrifice profaned. He must, therefore,

study the character of Christ with especial reference to this duty. Christ is his example. In him are meekness, kindness, humility, tenderness, those beautiful fruits of love, and by prayerfully beholding these graces and perfections of character, the disciple will himself grow into their possession ; as writes the Apostle Paul : “ But we all with open face, BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS *the glory of the Lord*, ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE !”

What are the *motives* to Christian Love ?

The Scriptures offer the most weighty considerations, the most ponderous truths, to urge the disciple to climb to the loftiest heights of holy love. A few of these shall now be briefly considered.

1. By possessing Christian love the disciple greatly increases his influence.

Next to his personal salvation, nothing is so important to a Christian as his in-

fluence over others. His chief business with men is to save them from sin and death. This he cannot do if his character be such as prejudices the wicked against him. There can be no question as to the prejudicial influence of uncharitableness. Look at the envious, covetous, selfish, cold-hearted professor of religion! Who esteems him? What worldly man will suffer himself to be persuaded by him? Do not the wicked say to him, "Physician, heal thyself!" The kind-hearted moralist has more influence than the uncharitable professor. While the Christian, whose soul is moulded by the hand of holy love, possesses an unbounded influence. Whose exhortations are listened to with respect? Whose prayers command the heart? Whose kindly admonitions in private are affectionately received? The reader must know that none but the men of charity; those men of large, noble, Christian affection, enjoy

this desirable influence. Our blessed Savior recognized this relation between Christian influence and Christian love. He prayed his Father that his disciples "*might be one*, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE;" hereby declaring that the increase of brotherly love, and the conversion of sinners, must go hand in hand.

Does the reader desire Christian influence? Let him obtain Christian love!

2. By living in the spirit of Christian love, the believer greatly increases his own enjoyment.

Jesus having commanded his disciples to love one another, enforced his command by the following precious words: "These things have I spoken unto you, that MY JOY MIGHT REMAIN IN YOU, AND THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL!" And John, his chosen friend, has said: "*If we love one another*, GOD DWELLETH IN US, AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US."

Can any thing be plainer than these

divine statements ? The indwelling God, the fullness of joy, are the glorious results of brotherly love. Blessed fruits ! Unspeakable delights ! Who for the sake of gratifying an uncharitable heart, would expel the indwelling God, and renounce the joy of Christ ? That the unloving soul is deprived of these great blessings, is evident from the lives of uncharitable professors. Look at them ! They are bitter, complaining, fretful, fault-finding, and censorious. Their very countenances declare their emptiness of spiritual joy. While those who are noted for their Christian affection, always wear the calm aspect of an inward joy. Would the reader be the happy possessor of Christ's joy—of his legacy of inward peace ? Let him seek grace to keep the new commandment.

3. By excelling in the practice of Christian love, the child of God will enjoy a great reward in heaven.

“YE ARE MY FRIENDS IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU,” said the Savior in reference to this new commandment. Thus forcibly teaching that the path to Christ’s friendship, is the “love of the brethren.” Why did John lie in Christ’s bosom? Why was he the disciple whom Jesus loved? Let John’s epistles answer the question! They display a soul breathing with love, and thus account for the Savior’s preference. Why did Christ require his anointing, by the hands of the weeping Mary, to be published to her praise wherever his gospel should be preached? Plainly as a mark of his especial regard for the love with which her soul burned. If then, on earth, Christ preferred those who loved most, will he not do so in heaven? If the affectionate and charitable John lay in his bosom when he was in the flesh, will not he and his kindred spirits be preferred in heaven! It must be even so. The

stars of brightest radiancy, the suns of fullest glory in the firmament above, will be the Johns and Marys of earth. They, by the loveliness of their lives, the glowing charity of their spirit, having most honored Christ and his gospel in this vale of tears, shall soar the highest and shine the brightest in the kingdom of glory.

4. Without charity no man can be saved.

The Scriptures teach no clearer truth than that the uncharitable man is no Christian; it is utterly useless to plead faith, prayer, zeal, or any thing else, unless *charity* can be produced. The absence of charity, proves all other pretensions false and hypocritical, and leaves the pretender like other sinners, without God and without hope in the world. Let the following passages of Holy Writ be carefully studied in proof of this position.

“HE THAT LOVETH NOT, KNOWETH

NOT GOD." How plain yet awful is this declaration. The following is equally expressive. "HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER ABIDETH IN DEATH." Mark this: he *abideth in death*; he is not possessed of the divine life, but still lies dead in sin. Let us quote once more: "IF A MAN SAY I LOVE GOD AND HATETH (i. e. does not love) HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR!" Awful conclusion! Yet it is the sentence of Him who is the Judge of all the earth.

It is, therefore, an unquestionable truth, that, according to the Scriptures, an uncharitable man or woman has no well-founded hope of heaven. He is deceived! Destruction yawns where he expects to find the gates of life!

Beloved reader! Are you guilty of trampling the New Commandment beneath your feet? Are you the victim of prejudice, envy, hate, coldness, or any other attribute of character which marks

the absence of genuine love? I pray you not to treat the matter of this little book lightly! Look your sin in the face. Repent of it. The Advocate above will aid you by his precious prayers. You will be forgiven. Then, henceforth, take the law of love for a rule. Look at the church and world through that law. Treat them according to its instruction. Spread its sacred influence. Teach men to bury their animosities: to shun divisions and heart-burnings, and thus aid in bringing on the glorious era when the universal Church shall possess but one heart and soul, when, indissolubly united together in Christ, it shall march in unbroken phalanx to the conquest of a revolted world.

THE END.









